

**MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL CITY COMMISSION MEETING  
FRIDAY, OCTOBER 25, 2013**

The City of Leesburg Commission held a special meeting Friday, October 25, 2013, at the Community Building. Mayor Knowles called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m. with the following members present:

Commissioner Elise Dennison  
Commissioner Jay Hurley  
Commissioner John Christian  
Commissioner Bill Polk  
Mayor David Knowles

Also present were Interim City Manager (ICM) Ray Sharp, City Clerk (CC) Betty Richardson, Deputy City Clerk (DCC) Andi Purvis, the news media, and others.

Commissioner Polk gave the invocation followed by the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America.

**INTERVIEWS OF FINAL TWO CITY MANAGER CANDIDATES:**

Colin Baenzinger, with Colin Baenzinger and Associates, stated this has been a long, hard process and the Commission is down to its two final candidates. Mr. Baenzinger introduced the first candidate Dr. Danny Crew.

Dr. Danny Crew stated he has been the City Manager in South Florida for the last ten years and in North Carolina for the ten years prior. He stated he graduated from Orlando High School, has three degrees from Florida State University, received his Doctorate in Public Administration from Nova University and is currently enrolled in a secondary Doctorate program with the University of Southerland, England in Music History. He stated Leesburg offers him the opportunity to return to Central Florida and with his experience of working in eight different jurisdictions he is hopeful he could provide the guidance Leesburg is expecting.

Questions and Answers:

Commissioner Hurley:

What attributes of the City of Leesburg would you market to businesses that you want to attract here?

Mr. Crew:

Every City has its own unique niches that need to be where they focus. This City has a couple of very interesting things which could be used for marketing: 1) tremendous amount of property down south with the industrial park going in and future development; 2) an airport, not every City has one, which can bring in some unique opportunities; and 3) a tremendous park system which even though may not be of interest to the businesses themselves, but for their employees and families shows the City's commitment to families. Your utility system is a key factor showing the City can provide a full range of utility products to a business and this is a key component for some businesses to know they can have reliable utilities.

Commissioner Christian:

What would you do the first six months if hired on the job for the City of Leesburg?

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Mr. Crew:

The first thing any manager needs to do is evaluate his staff; see who has what strengths and what weaknesses. They also need to study the community and hear from them to see where they want the City to go in the future so you can get a good feel for making recommendations. I think these are important things to the City, to the organization of the City and to the City in general and a new manager needs to have his feet wet before he starts recommending any wholesale changes or operating procedures.

Commissioner Dennison:

Let me ask you about the visioning we discussed this morning; the three to five year visioning plans. We have hit a little bit on this subject but it needs to be brought together and formalized. Would you tell us what your plans would be for that?

Mr. Crew:

Visioning is so important to the future of any City as it helps to husband the resources you have. One of the biggest problems cities can face is that without vision, goals and objectives, agreed upon by the elected leadership, its efforts tend to get defused or unfocused and it is the quickest way in the world to spend money which should not be spent. In Miami Gardens we had some great success with a two day visioning session with the council off site, out of the City, and brought in a professional coordinator, someone who knew how to run these meetings, and developed six major goals for the City. We also developed objectives for each of those goals and then developed action plans to meet each objective.

Mayor Knowles:

You have worked in a number of communities; think back what would the elected officials that you worked with say about you in 2013?

Mr. Crew:

I think they would say my strengths are certainly my ability in budgeting and finance. I think they will say I am very popular with staff, support and develop my staff; without a good staff, nothing gets accomplished. They will probably also tell you I do a good Halloween costume.

Commissioner Polk:

Mr. Crew I appreciate every answer given during our interview, it was very professional. All my questions were answered very well, the only question I might add to, which I have already asked you, for the public purpose was the date you could start and how long you might intend to stay with us if everything is going well?

Mr. Crew:

I would like to be able to start probably the first work day in January. If I were offered the position it would probably take at least three weeks to negotiate the contract and I just do not want to have to try to come to work and get started on something during the holidays. To answer the second part, I stayed ten years in both of my prior positions, probably about three years to long. I think managers need to change as councils change and would estimate five years minimum to seven years maximum is what I would like to stay. I would anticipate if I did move here, I would probably end up retiring staying here the rest of my life.

Commissioner Polk thanked him for his answers.

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Commissioner Hurley:

If you would explain to us or describe your experience with outsources and your methodology of evaluating the cost effectiveness.

Mr. Crew:

Outsourcing is a two edged sword. I found many times when it has been helpful, useful, and certainly cost effective and found other times where it is has not worked out and not met the expectations wanted. Often times it can certainly be cheaper in terms of dollars and cents, but that is not always the priority and why it is important when you look at outsourcing to look at everything involved. For example, when Miami Gardens first became a City we only had about twenty employees and Parks and Recreation, Public Works and those services were outsourced. When Hurricane Wilma hit there was almost no one from the city's point of view to help in addressing clean up. A parks and recreation company cannot just be called in to do clean up along the streets so we called in our school crossing guards to clean up the parks. It is important to have a body of employees to help out in emergency situations. On the other hand, the other important factor is we found was parents were concerned about who their children were being placed with. These were outside companies with no direct control by the City, no history with the City, or history with the children and it was pretty much driven from the community up they wanted to have an in-house Parks and Recreation department. So we brought the Parks and Recreation program back in-house and as a matter of fact the person who was the private director of that company was hired to be our director because she did a wonderful job. We also contracted out our commercial solid waste and found out from our residents they liked having the City's residential solid waste for pick up. But these are the kinds of questions you have to look at when you privatize. I am not pro or against, I think the reality of municipal government today is that you have to review all options.

Commissioner Christian:

Sensitivity to different gender, race and ethnic groups is a priority for us. Can you provide us with specific examples of how you have demonstrated your commitment to these principles in past?

Mr. Crew:

As you know Miami Gardens is the largest prominently African American city in the State of Florida. One of the goals of the City was to, not necessarily hire minorities off hand, but to develop minorities to be able to move into positions at a later date. There is just such tremendous talent out there that is under-utilized with both blacks and females. One example, I was the second employee hired and we had two contract employees, secretaries, so I was looking through their personnel file and one of the secretaries, a black female, had worked for the national park service, had a bachelor degree in biology, a master in business administration and here she was as a secretary and I said this was not going to do. Our priority in the City when I first started was image of the city, getting people to believe in Miami Gardens, so the first thing I did was to hire her and have her establish a Keep Miami Gardens Beautiful Chapter program and within two months she already had 40 to 50 volunteers from the community. This was talent not being looked at and it is all over the place. I hired a female Deputy City Manager, which kind of surprised everyone, because the City had just not thought in those terms and she was so good she left me and became City Manager in Hallandale Beach. I feel real comfortable when I left the City they now have the quality staff they need to be successful in the

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future. I look beyond the typical hiring model when I look for jobs; I am going to hire white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestants; blacks, and females. I am going to hire anyone who can do the best job for the City regardless of their ethnic background and I think my record has proven this.

Commissioner Dennison:

You have already touched on part of this; what do you see, if you are chosen, as part of your three week contract negotiation along with pay, benefits and any other additions?

Mr. Crew:

Whatever is agreed upon as the starting pay will be the last pay I get here because I am not interested in any raises or anything. Certainly, I understand there is going to be a substantial cut from what I was making, but since starting to collect a Florida retirement, I have no problem within the advertised range. I think the standard stuff Managers usually receive, like family health insurance, a car allowance; I certainly do not want a city vehicle as I do not think it is the best way to use city resources. I do have a sense of humor and if you cannot have fun working there is just no purpose in it as life is too short.

Mayor Knowles:

Do you view growth as a positive?

Mr. Crew:

Growth is a two edge sword just like almost everything in life. Certainly, you cannot stand still or go backwards, even if you want to it will not happen. You have to accept change, do your best to manage it, and it is one of the things that goes back to visioning. You know things are going to change and need to think beyond the next two or three years to where the City is going to be in ten to twenty years and how to get there.

Mr. Crew stated he does appreciate the opportunity to be here, it is exciting and he has not been excited for a couple years. He stated whether or not he gets the job he wishes the City the absolute best, it is a wonderful place and he could see that from the citizens who came to the Beast Feast. He sat and talked with them and the things they had to say about the City were candid and they did not know who he was.

Commissioner Hurley:

From the whole panel, who you have talked to today individually, what do you think was the most pertinent question you were asked?

Mr. Crew:

I think the issue of where the City is going, how, and what it takes to get there. This is critical for most cities, but here in particular you know change is coming; it is something to be dealt with. I think this is where a lot of attention needs to be placed in the next year so the City does not lose what it currently has.

Commissioner Christian:

For the sake of our employees who are present; Leesburg has always been a first class City in Lake County and you and I have talked about Police, Fire, employee morale, and about your first six months on the job. What things can you think of off the bat to ensure our employees that the new City Manager hired will make sure employee needs, wants, and desires are looked at, analyzed to get Leesburg back to where we have to put an ad in

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the paper or on the internet telling people to stop applying for Leesburg because people want to come work for our City. So what things can you implement to help Leesburg get back to the place where employees do not feel like the first budget cut will be employees, retirement, and future longevity at the City of Leesburg is going to be something you are going to have foremost in your heart.

Mr. Crew:

I think all of those things are going to have to be conversations we have. I think as I said earlier, nothing gets accomplished in any organization without its employees; they are not the enemy. I have never looked upon a council-manager or council-employee relationship as adversarial; we are all here for the same purpose. I think in talking yesterday with the employees, Department Heads, Assistants and others I met, they are all excited about Leesburg and wanted to tell me the neat and great things they are doing. This is something to be captured and recognized and the way you recognize people is by paying them a fair wage and benefits. We have come through a tough five years, with several cuts, and reduction of benefits, but my goal was, and the goal of my replacement, is to bring those things back as we can. I think it has to be a priority that we work on to bring these benefits back to our employees.

Commissioner Dennison thanked Mr. Crew for his honesty during the individual sessions and for the information this afternoon.

Mayor Knowles:

The Ten Commandments are in the Old Testament; in your book of City Managers what are your three best or most important commandments?

Mr. Crew:

Thou shall not lie. The only way this relationship in the Council-Manager form of government works is with trust and without trust you end up in an adversarial situation. The Manager's job is not only to keep trust between himself and the board but also between the staff and board. The second thing is for a manager to have a severance contract and the reason for this is the manager has to tell council what they do not always want to hear. If there is not have a good severance contract the manager will not be telling council things to upset them which are not good for either the manager or the city.

Commissioner Christian thanked Mr. Crew for being honest and up front with the Commission.

Meeting recessed at 2:09 p.m. and reconvened at 2:17 p.m.

Colin Baenzinger introduced the second candidate, Mr. Al Minner, currently the City Manager in Sebastian, Florida.

Mr. Al Minner stated he is currently the City Manager in Sebastian, Florida. He grew up in a little town called Barnesville, Maryland; went to Poolesville High School, across from, believe it or not, Leesburg, Virginia. Graduated from Frostburg State University where he received his undergraduate degree in Political Science and History and earned his Master's degree in Public Administration from Shippensburg University, in South Central Pennsylvania. Moved to the mid-west where he worked for about five years as Assistant City Administrator and City Administrator in Vandalia, Missouri. He then

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moved to the Sunshine State, got hired and was lucky enough to serve in Ft Meade, Florida where he got acquainted with Leesburg during the help provided in the 2004 Hurricane season. He stated he then moved to Sebastian, Florida where he has been with just under twenty years' experience in the City Manager profession. He stated he is married to Kris, his college sweetheart, and they have three kids, Madelyn, Cecelia, and Freddie. Mr. Minner stated he is real interested in Leesburg, and to return to the electric utilities, and thinks Leesburg has a number of interesting topics with economic development. He stated he appreciates the opportunity provided to bring him here, quite hospitable and he enjoyed the Beast Feast.

Commissioner Polk:

Appreciate you and your wife coming to Leesburg. The time you can start this job if hired and the time you might think of leaving if still happy?

Mr. Minner:

If hired, once we agree on a contract, I will give notice to the City Council in Sebastian which requires a thirty day notice. As far as leaving, at this stage in my career I do not see Leesburg as a stepping stone; I see Leesburg as a community where I want to be for a while. I think my track record shows stability, as well as professional progression so the things which interest us in Leesburg are: 1) its issues, and 2) the charm, livability and family atmosphere. As to when I would leave is hopefully on my own accord and I do not know when that will come, because if the council is happy with my performance and I am happy professionally and personally, then I think the sky is the limit. So, I am going to purposely leave the second part of your question unanswered.

Commissioner Hurley:

What attributes of the City of Leesburg would you market to business that you are trying to attract to come here?

Mr. Minner:

First, is the Electric utility; one of the things in my experience in the mid-west was trying to work hard on providing competitive electric rates. The electric utility departments really need to focus on being a good utility provider and one of the things which impressed me is the research and work Leesburg has done to come up with the share demand savings with some of its largest clients. I think businesses are looking to shave their costs and the big consumers of utilities are really going to be looking to have discounted and wholesale rates, so this needs to be marketed. The second thing, is the airport; Sebastian tried to market its airport trying to leverage the FDOT monies to build turnkey facilities ready for industrial development. Leesburg seems to be doing to same thing, so I think between your industrial site and airport site those are really good options. Third, I think is Leesburg's home town ambience and rustic charm. It is one of Florida's gems, where you are close enough to the urban amenities but yet still really maintain that home town feel so many people are looking for. These three things, I think, are the things we can use to promote Leesburg.

Commissioner Christian:

The first six months what would it look like if you were hired in Leesburg?

Mr. Minner:

I think getting acclimated and getting your feet wet takes longer than six months. ICMA, International City Manager's Association, has a standard that once an executive is



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appointed by a City Commission they are required to serve two years in that community. I personally think this standard is a little short and I say that with some experience having worked in three different communities. I think in six months what you can expect is to know the issues, topics and speak educated on those things. To really get engrained and going, in my experience, I have found the peak productivity comes about a year, year and a half into the job, and then about two to five years is when you really start hitting your stride. So, in the first six months, I will be working with each Commissioner, individually and collectively, to learn individual goals and collective thinking to get a good feel and gain consensus and direction from City Council. Then, start to blend that consensus and put together a mission and clear directives for me to take to your management team and employees so we can start working on them. On the community side, I want to get to know the community leaders because I think everyone has a stake in Leesburg; as City Manager I do not think there are just five bosses but 23,000 bosses.

Commissioner Dennison:

Why should we hire you? Why are you the best choice right now?

Mr. Minner:

I think every City Manager candidate probably has the nuts and bolts to make a good manager; probably all good practitioners, know organizational theory, pretty well at finance and know how to get the best out of a penny. What I bring that I would boast on is my experience level. I have managed at one time or another in my career pretty much every system Leesburg has from electric to water to sewer to gas to airports. I would say I am a good used car, have some mileage but also has a lot of mileage left on the engine. I think what we see throughout the profession too in this time is kind of a changing of generations; leaving the baby boom generation and generation "X" is starting to move in. ICMA dubbed it the greying of the profession and I have the grey to go along with it but I think I would be a good transition for Leesburg to give you hopefully some good longevity and a nice tenure so hopefully in three to five years you will not be doing this again. The other thing I bring is a lot of energy and enthusiasm; I am really excited about tackling some of your big issues, like with the utilities transfer issues and some of the growth issues. I think you are on the precipice there of some political wind changing and different things going on in Leesburg that frankly in my career I have been through and managed. I think I bring those things and I think I bring some prospective and an ability to hopefully unite everyone.

Mayor Knowles:

You have worked for a number of municipalities; what would other elected officials say about you if they were here today?

Mr. Minner:

I hate bragging on myself and the honest answer is I do not know what they would say. So having said that, I would hope they say I was sharp when it comes to numbers, resourceful, creative, tells what he thinks, but works under the collective wisdom of the council. I hope they would say I am very concerned about each and every one of your individual goals and objectives but at the end of day will promote what the majority of council wants to do and that is ever changing. Then I would hope they say fair and reasonable.

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Commissioner Polk:

Would you be willing to take off your coat, put on your tennis shoes, go down to the Library and meet with the citizens of Leesburg and the public on occasion, at least in the beginning so they know who you are and know where you stand.

Mr. Minner:

I stand ready to give all the credit and take all the blame that goes with the territory. Also, the cliché an open door, I really do have an open door, but am not afraid to shut it when needed as far as management goes. In each community I have worked, I have the approach of 5,000 bosses or whatever the number may be, and each one of those has a stake in this business. We want to run government like a business and be efficient, spending money wisely, but what makes government different than business is business has one person calling the shots with a singular goal to make money and have profit; it is the American way. But government is about the community, organization, compromise and about trying to blend a number of agendas. So, to do that effectively you have to have an open door, be approachable, accountable and that goes along with taking off the tie and meeting with people or letting them feel free that your number is advertised or they can meet with the manager and not be above reproach. It is important for everyone to feel they can talk to the City Manager whether a Commissioner, employee or a citizen.

Commissioner Polk thanked both Mr. Minner and his wife for coming to Leesburg and sharing their time. Stated he has been very professional with all his answers and wished him the best in the search. He stated if Mr. Minner does come to Leesburg, it seems Sebastian will be the loser and Leesburg the winner.

Commissioner Hurley:

Describe your experience with outsourcing and your methodology of evaluating the cost effectiveness of outsourcing.

Mr. Minner:

I think outsourcing is always important to look at and in my experience outsourcing made sense and in some cases it did not. To give examples in my career, not to say this is the case for Leesburg, because while we are all the same, we are all different. Outsourcing in the communities I have worked in, Solid Waste always seemed to be something outsourced and you have to be able to get a competitive number. When I was in Ft Meade for example, I had one Commissioner who wanted us to consider bringing Solid Waste back in-house, so we did a financial analysis and tried to set up as many scenarios as possible to measure whether it made financial sense. In the Solid Waste case, for Ft Meade, it did not so it stayed privatized and had good service with competitive monthly rates for our citizens. In Sebastian, we have flirted from time to time with privatizing some of our park maintenance, bringing in private contractors to mow the fields and keep the parks down. In that situation, we did not think we found the right numbers because even though maybe if you go privatization you can keep the park mowed cheaply but what happens on the flip side is you do not have employees for the eight other things that need to be done. When it comes to privatization, it really is a matter of doing the financial analysis, weigh the tangible and nontangible, and see if it makes dollars and sense.

Commissioner Christian:

How do you handle "No" even when it makes financial sense and goes against your personal views?



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Mr. Minner:

One of the things I have a weakness with is saying no; I do not want to be a no guy. Unfortunately, I think sometimes in bureaucracy the first answer received from a government employee is no; so I do not like no. In our job it is to work to find how to say yes.

Commissioner Dennison:

This goes along with should we hire you, and you become the City Manager of Leesburg, if that lucky; what do you look for as far as contract, remuneration, and benefit packages?

Mr. Minner:

I am willing to be hired within the range advertised, so my number is about \$145,000. As far as benefits go, however you pay your standard employee benefits is acceptable. I think we should talk a car allowance versus a City vehicle, your deferred comp plan or retirement system with your general employees where you were paying about 13%, if I remember correctly, so those would be reasonable benefits as well. Vacation somewhere in the neighborhood of three to four weeks and as far as severance pay, I think the state cap of five months is reasonable, so those are the basic perimeters.

Mayor Knowles:

Do you view growth as a positive?

Mr. Minner:

Yes, growth like everything is a two edge sword with its positives and negatives and I think the key is where to find the middle ground.

Commissioner Hurley:

After speaking with each Commissioner today individually, what do you feel was the most pertinent question you were asked and how did you answer?

Mr. Minner:

I came prepped to talk about electric utilities, transfer issues and how to sustain your organization moving forward and I think each of us had some time on that, so hopefully, I provided some good answers. I think the world is becoming extremely competitive and municipal utility communities can fall into the trap of always relying on those utility transfers to the General Fund. I think for a short time more that may be but in the long term we are going to have to be competitive and make some tough choices like what do to with transfers, where to go with taxes, and what to do with service levels. I do not have the answers today but if hired as your manager I am sure we will have those conversations and I am prepared for that. I think the second one was about the political winds blowing in Leesburg with some of the growth issues moving forward through your community. Each Commissioner also asked what was different between Sebastian and Leesburg and the answer was Sebastian has already gone through some of the political changes Leesburg is approaching. One thing I will add is you are looking at someone who does not think politics is a bad word. If you hire me I will not waffle, I will give you my opinion, blend consensus and trying to find a compromise everyone on the Commission and in the community is happy with.

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Commissioner Christian:

Sensitivity to different gender, race and ethnic groups is a priority for us. Can you provide us with some specific examples of how you have demonstrated your commitment to these principles in past?

Mr. Minner:

I have worked in diversity and handled those type things by being myself. You do not judge a book by its cover, you judge people by the content of their character; you are honest, fair, and hold everyone to the same standard. You want transparency, integrity, and treat everyone the way you want to be treated. As long as you do that then I think you meet those standards and that how is I am going to approach the job and how I want those working for me to approach the job as well.

Commissioner Dennison:

Going to bring up an issue because we discussed it and I would like to put it to rest. Some of the department heads had some concern with the electric company are you planning to micro manage that department and if so, explain?

Mr. Minner:

Yes, the issue here is I am not an electric expert, I think I know enough to keep them honest which is what you want out of your general manager. But, I am going to spin this question now into management style and my management style is to be democratically authoritative. With the council I will be democratic, I will not look for three votes but to blend consensus (yes sir, yes ma'am). I am sure department heads will think I am a little wishy washy catering to council and my answer will be yes I am because Commissioners have different districts to serve, different values, attitudes, and beliefs and it is the manager's job to blend it all together. I will also be the same way with department managers, they will have as much rope as they need, I will not get involved with the nitty gritty but they will be held accountable. They will expect certain standards from their departments and when not meeting those standards I will become detailed oriented. I do have a specific affinity for the electric side and I think they will appreciate that. I will not hide that fact, it was one of my major interests in why I applied for Leesburg, but I think what you will get from me is the right approach. It will be hands off and general management when needed and detailed oriented or micro managed if you will when it needs to be.

Mayor Knowles:

The Ten Commandments are in the Old Testament; in your book of City Managers what are your three best or most important three commandments?

Mr. Minner:

Be transparent, explain what you are thinking; be honest, give the good and the bad, and accept the collective wisdom of the City Council.

Commissioner Hurley thanked Mr. Minner for coming, stating it was a pleasure to meet him and his wife and wished him the very best of luck. He did say, to give some kind of credit to Mr. Baenzinger, it is amazing after speaking with the two candidates with one being in the other room how they answered the questions so much alike on so many aspects.

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Commissioner Christian thanked Mr. Minner and his wife, Kris, stating he now has weekend plans for visiting Sebastian to see how it looks.

Commissioner Dennison thanked Mr. Minner as well; stating it was a pleasure meeting him and his wife and him becoming an honorary "Leesburgian" at the Beast Feast. Thank you very much you were very well prepared for this interview.

Mayor Knowles thanked Mr. Minner as well, stating he and the other candidate have managed to put a smile on Ray Sharp's face that has not come off for two days. However, ICM Sharp is not quite aware yet the Commission is going to make him City Manager Emeritus.

Colon Baenzinger stated you have seen two very good candidates and either one would do a good job for Leesburg. He stated the question is which one is going to fit best in your community and to do the best job for you. Each one has different skills; different capabilities and you have had the opportunity to assess those today. He stated this is one of the reasons they prefer to wait until like Monday to have an opportunity to really weigh the plus and minuses to determine who you think is the best candidate. Mr. Baenzinger stated he will not be present on Monday but we have gotten really good at using the telephone, so will attend by phone.

Commissioner Polk asked Mr. Baenzinger if he is guarantying both candidates. Mr. Baenzinger replied yes, for two years.

**ADJOURN:**

Commissioner Christian moved to adjourn the meeting and Commissioner Polk seconded the motion. The meeting adjourned at 2:55 p.m.

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Mayor

ATTEST:

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Betty M. Richardson  
City Clerk

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J. Andi Purvis  
Recorder